

Oak Creek Principal Newsletter

September 2009
Oak Creek Elementary

Jenna Berumen, Principal
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UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◇ Sept. 22nd School Picture Day
- ◇ Sept. 22nd General PTA Meeting 7:00 PM
- ◇ Sept. 24th Grades 1-6 Back to School Night (grades 4-6: 6:30-7 & Grades 1-3: 7:15-7:45)
- ◇ Sept. 24th MINIMUM DAY for Students
- ◇ Sept. 24th -25th CELDT Testing
- ◇ Sept. 25th Fall Social – Movie Night
- ◇ Sept. 29th Gift Wrap Sale Begins
- ◇ Oct. 1st CELDT Testing
- ◇ Oct. 9th Parent Conferences (Grades 4-6)
- ◇ Oct. 9th MINIMUM DAY (Grades 4-6 ONLY)
- ◇ Oct. 12th, 13th, 16th Parent Conferences (grades K-6)
- ◇ Oct. 12th, 13th, 16th MINIMUM DAYS (grades 1-6)
- ◇ Oct. 15th NO SCHOOL Parent Conferences
- ◇ Oct. 19th NO SCHOOL Staff Development
- ◇ Oct. 23rd Walk to School Day
- ◇ Oct. 26th-30th Red Ribbon Week

A New Year Brings Some New Beginnings!

As we begin our 2009-2010 school year at Oak Creek, we are adjusting to many new situations. As you know, due to the state's budget crisis, we have new student to teacher ratios in grades one through three. This adjustment had an effect on the number of staff members needed this year. In June we said "happy trails" to Mrs. Balogh and Mrs. Calkins as they retired and embarked on the next chapter in their lives. Additionally, we had to say goodbye to our temporary teachers on staff: Ms. Rosenwald, Ms. Chen, Mrs. O'Connell, Mrs. Watkins and Mrs. Geronsin. Fortunately, some growth in enrollment has made it possible to bring back both Ms. Rosenwald and Ms. Vose who we lost after the 2007-2008 school year. Ms. Rosenwald will be teaching sixth grade and we've welcomed Ms. Vose back to OC in a kindergarten position. In other staff news, Mrs. Munson welcomed a baby girl into her family in mid July and has decided to take a leave of absence. Due to her leave, we were able to invite Ms. Chen back to fill the spot in sixth grade. In last minute fashion, we had many new first graders enroll and that necessitated the addition of a first grade teacher. We feel honored to welcome Mr. Chris Bailey as a new member of the Oak Creek family. He comes to us well-equipped for the job after two very successful years teaching first grade at Woodbury Elementary School. Also, Cyndy Howe has been selected to fill the role of our third Project SUCSESS special day class teacher. She has had the best preparation one could hope for after years of working in Mrs. Barnett's class as an instructional assistant. We also welcome Mrs. Jessica Hopkins to OC as our additional Speech and Language Pathologist. She is a product of Orange County and has recently relocated to Southern California from the Sacramento area where she worked as a school speech and language pathologist for a few years. As you may know, after many years in the front office at OC, Kay Bradley has moved on to a higher level clerk position at Woodbridge High School. We're sorry to see her go however we are pleased that she is embarking on a new adventure in her professional life. To fill the void left by Kay, we have welcomed Staci Rossi, formerly our health clerk, to the clerk position. She is sharp and quick but there is so much to learn! We appreciate your patience in these initial weeks as she transitions into her position. Finally, Debbie Foret, former OC parent and instructional assistant, will be filling the busy job of the health clerk. She is currently being trained so she can hit the ground running in a few days. We're lucky to have all of these wonderful individuals joining and rejoining our team!

Please visit our school website for all of the latest OC news and upcoming events! www.iusd.org/oc/

Informative Articles for Parents

School Attendance: Issues to Consider

How important is it for kids to be in school? School attendance is a baseline factor in determining student success.

By Great Schools Staff

The following are excerpts from the article above.

How important is attendance?

The attendance rate is important because students are more likely to succeed in academics when they attend school consistently. It's difficult for the teacher and the class to build their skills and progress if a large number of students are frequently absent. In addition to falling behind in academics, students who are not in school on a regular basis are more likely to get into trouble with the law and cause problems in their communities.

A 2008 study conducted by the Rodel Community Scholars at Arizona State University that tracked students from kindergarten through high school found that dropout patterns were linked with poor attendance, beginning in kindergarten. Gregory Hickman, director of the Rodel Community Scholars program and former director of the Arizona Dropout Initiative, notes they discovered that as early as kindergarten, behavioral differences are apparent between those who go on to graduate and those who drop out, with dropouts missing an average of 124 days by eighth grade.

School budgets may suffer when students don't attend. In many states, school budgets are based on the average daily attendance at a school. If many students enrolled at a school fail to consistently attend, the school has less money to pay for essential classroom needs.

How can schools increase their attendance rate?

According to the National Center for Student Engagement, schools are most effective in achieving high attendance rates when parents, school leaders and community members work together to focus on reducing absences and truancy, and keeping kids in schools. The [center's Web site](#) provides [10 tips for schools and communities to improve their attendance rates](#). Among them:

- Make the school a place where parents and students feel welcome.
- Forge a relationship with local law enforcement and make them allies in showing the community, family and students that school is the place to be.
- Forge a relationship with local businesses so that they cooperate in encouraging students to go to school and not congregate at businesses during school hours.
- Call parents - not an answering machine - when their children are not in school to let them know the school is concerned.
- Talks to students about why they were gone and let them know they were missed.



*Remember to
read every day!*

*“W.I.S.E. Owls always
have a winning
attitude, demonstrate
integrity, show
respect &
responsibility, and
encourage others.”*

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The full article can be found at:

<http://www.greatschools.net/parenting/behavior-discipline/school-attendance-issues.gs?content=644>

What's Happening In...

Kindergarten

September is such an exciting time in Kindergarten! The students are thrilled to be starting school and each of us is more than excited to be teaching a new class of Kindergarteners. We started the year off with a first day of school gathering. Each child was introduced to their classroom and their teacher with their family members close by. Special activities were developed to make each Kindergarten student feel comfortable and welcome on their first day of school. During the month of September, the Oak Creek Kindergarteners will be busy getting acclimated to school and learning our school wide W.I.S.E. Owl expectations. Starting the second week of school, a new letter of the alphabet is introduced each day. We talk about the sound the letter makes, and words that start with that letter. We read books and sing songs that have many words reinforcing the letter of the day. The students will also practice writing the letter that has been introduced each day. September is known as our "all about apples" month. We do many activities using apples. Apples are the focus when graphing in math, and we even have the Kindergarteners taste apples in order to discover describing words for journal writing and more. The students will illustrate and dictate their favorite experiences about their first week of school. These will be featured on a special writing wall in each of our classes. Coming up in October we will be going on a field trip to the Pumpkin Patch. This field trip enhances the Kindergarteners' learning. The children illustrate and write about this experience in their journal and use the pumpkins they selected from the patch to do fun learning activities in math and science. *By Mrs. Geddes, Kindergarten Teacher*

WANTED...

School Site Council Candidates

As we begin a new year, we are seeking candidates to run for our school site council. The school site council is comprised of five parent/community members and five staff members. The unit reviews the site level action plan and oversees the spending of the school and library improvement program budget. Our council meets five to seven times per year for meetings and walk-throughs. We will be filling the void left by three members who completed their term last June. Please e-mail me for more information at jberumen@iusd.org by Friday, September 18th if you are interested in running.

STAR Test Results



The 2008-2009 school year brought many exciting new opportunities for student learning. As you know, we began the process of teaching certain elements of reading instruction in RtI (Response to Instruction) groups in all grades. With the focus always on meeting individual student needs, RtI created a more effective approach to meeting this goal. Our school's API (Academic Performance Index) score reflects this effort and the strength of our new mathematics adoption as an effective teaching tool. Oak Creek's API increased by 17 points this year resulting in our published growth API being a 913. We are very proud of this achievement as it is a reflection of significant growth in student achievement. Additionally, we have met all areas required by our AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress.) Parent reports of individual student progress were mailed home in August. If you did not receive your report, you may obtain a copy from the school office. As you review your student(s)' achievement, please remember to compare them to themselves and look for growth from one year to the next. The following website was designed by the California Department of Education to assist parents and members of the community in understanding the STAR data, <http://www.starsamplequestions.org/>. We continue to be proud of each of our students and look forward to providing many more engaging and enriching learning experiences for them this year.